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the case, that all antecedent probabilities are against the truth of this idea. For *à priori* probabilities must always give way before observed facts. But what in this case is the observed fact? Simply that the number of recorded earth-throes has increased in a greater degree than could be expected from the mere increase in the attention directed to earthquakes. At first sight nothing seems clearer than that this has happened, and nothing can seem more certain than that such evidence is decisive. But in reality the evidence which has been gathered has not the meaning which has been (very naturally) attributed to it. It is not the case that observed earthquakes of a certain kind have increased four or five times in number. Were it so we might well say that such an increase could not be explained by mere increase in the number of observers. What has happened has been this, that observation has so far increased in exactness that earth-throes, such as before had been left unnoticed, are now observed and recorded. This is a very different matter. If we extend our observations so as to include an entirely new class of earthquakes, we may increase in any degree whatever (what degree can only be determined by observation) the number of recorded earthquakes. There may be a thousand tremors to every throe, a hundred earth-throes to every earthquake, properly so-called.

RICHARD A. PROCTOR.

II.

SEND BACK THE OBELISK !

ON a cold, disagreeable day in the mid-winter of 1881 I was present in the fashionable throng gathered in the Metropolitan Museum of Art to witness the dedication to the city of New York of Cleopatra's Needle, which had been transferred from Egypt and erected at the door of the museum in Central Park.

It was with a feeling of sadness akin to pain that I looked upon the familiar form of my old friend, for such, indeed, the obelisk was. During my long military service in Egypt I had frequently encamped within the limits of its shadows, and, when lost in day-dreams, I had gazed upon its stony face and, musing, read there the story of its past grandeur and glory. In imagination I saw it as it stood at the door of the great Temple of the Sun at Heliopolis, where it reflected from its gold-embellished sides the lights which flashed from the altars within, kindled by the hand of the great high-priest who performed the sacred rites, him who was the father-in-law of Joseph. There, side by side with its fellow monolith, it stood, and, wet with the dews of morning, waited to be kissed by the rays of the sun, or turned its face southward and along the Nile, as if to salute its sister obelisk in the far distant Ethiopia at Karnac.

Again, I saw it at Heliopolis at the period when Herodotus and Plato were there engaged in studying the "Wisdom of Egypt." And again I saw it standing in the Sebasteum, at Alexandria, where it had been removed by the loving hand of Cleopatra. And thus I saw it loom out from the blaze of fire and cloud of smoke as the grand temple fell under the infamous decree of the Emperor Theodosius.

Another day I beheld march past beneath its shadow the conquering armies of Alexander and Cæsar, the Arab hosts of Amrou, and in turn the legions of Napoleon and Kleber. It unfolded to me, in its own mystic way, the glory of the days that had been, and the grandeur of the great Thotmes, the father and founder of the obelisk. It told of Cleopatra's love and devotion. It thrilled with the pride of the Pharaohs. It tingled with the shame of Actium. On its solid foundation in Alexandria it stood when I last looked upon it, from out the wreck of time unscathed and untouched either by fire or the storm of battle, a grand and magnificent tablet of an unknown time and people. And now, as I stood in the presence of that block of stone rudely torn from its native shore—a stranger within our gates—I felt a sense of shame come over me as in fancy I listened to the well-merited reproaches addressed my countrymen for the deep damnation of its taking off—an act of vandalism which may be justly likened to that of the theft of the Elgin Marbles from the Temple of Minerva.

The brilliant orator of the occasion asserted, in the inception of his address, that the transaction and the removal of the obelisk were creditable to our nation and our day, and as a corollary to this proposition he asked : “ Whether our system of religion and our system of government would outlast the obelisk ? ” adding the reflection : “ Can you expect the soft folds of luxury to wrap themselves closer and closer and your nation to know no decrepitude ? And will your nation last ? ” “ These are questions,” he said, “ the obelisk may ask, but not now.” Whatever doubts Mr. Evarts may have had upon the stability of the government then, let me hasten to assure him that if the obelisk seriously intends to ask any such questions it must do so very soon ; for, pausing in my rambles through the park a few days ago, I remarked with much alarm that Cleopatra's Needle is fast crumbling away, and unless some heroic remedy is applied to arrest decay, it may not be preserved long enough to ask whether the “ nation will last ? ”

When the memorial ceremonies had been completed, and justly merited compliments had been rendered to the skill and genius of the naval officer, who saw in the matter only a test of his professional ability, I turned from the scene silently protesting against what I deemed to be purely and simply a desecration and a wrong, So strong was this conviction that I wrote the following note for publication :

“ Cleopatra's Needle upon our shores can never be other than a reproach. It was rudely torn from its base at the inspiration of some private and vulgar enterprise as yet concealed. It is not a gift to the nation, though the Department of State has permitted its consular agent to act in a semi-official capacity in its acceptance.

“ Has the agent represented to the department the very great unwillingness of Tewfik Khedive to carry out the pseudo-promise of the bankrupt and dethroned Ismail with reference to the transfer of this monument ? Has he signaled to the department the general cry of indignation which arose in all Egypt at the profanation-vandalism to be consummated, and that the populace were restrained from violent opposition to its removal only in deference to the wishes of the Egyptian Government ?

"The people of Alexandria, it is said, have declared their intention to erect, upon the site of the obelisk, a monument reciting the circumstances of the removal, and declaring the act one of pure vandalism." I further added what will appear as doubly significant in view of the actual decay of the obelisk : "Ere it be too late, ere the winters of New York shall have done for Cleopatra's Needle what a score of centuries have not done, and could not do, let the city of New York disown the act of the government, and by popular subscription, if need be, return to the despoiled and outraged city her lost monument.

"This would be an act worthy of a generous people. It would be in the way of 'the eternal fitness of things,' and a rebuke to that insolence of money which seeks notoriety and place by attaching its name to enterprises which attract the attention and applause of the populace."

In the autumn of the same year of the ceremony to which allusion is made, I returned to Egypt. Impelled by curiosity, I visited the site where the needle once stood. It had been stated, among other reasons, to excuse its removal, that the "sea was encroaching upon the land, and if not taken down it was destined to topple into the sea." I measured the distance, and so far from this being the case, I found, in fact, that the land is gaining upon the sea, and what was known as the "old port" is destined to become high and dry land, and will thus be a large and valuable acquisition to the government, on which a new city may be built. The Secretary of State at Washington was doubtless kept in ignorance not only of the state of public feeling, so manifestly hostile to the removal of the obelisk, but, more important still, of the opposition of the Khedive, which was only too apparent in his reply to the interested consular agent, who did not scruple to employ the authority of his office to force the Khedive to consent. Tewfik said : "Mr. Consul, take it ; my people complain ; I am delighted to see that they appreciate these antiquities ; I agree with them that they are of great historical value to us, but I do not wish to offend the Great Republic." This is not the language, surely, of one who makes a voluntary gift, but one made under compulsion, and its acquisition was neither "creditable to our nation," nor "to our day," and it is certain that Mr. Evarts would never have authorized such action had he been kept advised of the true condition of affairs. But then it was idle to expect that this should be so. The United States Consulate in Egypt has been for many years an Augean stable, and quite beyond the control of the Secretaries of State, who seem to have abandoned it heretofore to the questionable care of their subordinates. And hence the series of scandals which have made it "famous."

Other nations, it may be objected, have taken obelisks from Egypt. True, but they found them buried in the sand, or they took them from some remote and ruined city. Cleopatra's Needle stood upon a fixed and solid foundation in the beautiful and populous city founded by Alexander the Great. It was the only monument within the limits of the city. It was a monument of Egyptian fame, Egyptian art, and bore the name of a celebrated Egyptian queen. In Egypt it represented a part of her glorious history. In America it is meaningless and senseless. Had one been constructed of soap it would have been as appropriate and perhaps just as enduring. At any rate, no wrong would have

been committed—no country despoiled. There is a common scandal in Egypt that the obelisk was pulled down at the “inspiration of some private enterprise,” and Mr. Salvago, who was then the United States consular agent, affirms most positively that he paid away the sum of £600 sterling as a share claimed for services rendered in the purchase of the steamer “Dessouk” from the Egyptian Government, which steamer was destined to transport the obelisk to America; and Salvago means to say that there were two prices for the “Dessouk,” one which Mr. Vanderbilt paid and the other which the Egyptian Government received. Mr. Salvago says he knows to whom he gave this money, a kind of “boodle,” and Mr. Vanderbilt should call upon him to tell. In any event it adds nothing to the glory of the manner in which the obelisk has been acquired, and may cause the monument itself to tingle anew with shame.

Who shall say that the acknowledged disintegration of the obelisk now is not due to the interposition of some avenging spirit who seeks to redress its wrongs, and thus commits its crumbling sands to winds which waft them back to its eastern home, there to commingle with the dust of ages from whence it came? Be this as it may, let us anticipate its absolute decay, and, as I have already suggested, raise a popular subscription, and “return to the despoiled and outraged city of Alexandria her lost monument. This would be an act worthy of a generous people.” This is far better than paraffine-waterproof, which only prolongs the agony. The obelisk is suffering from consumption, and only a change of climate can save it from annihilation.

CHAS. CHAILLÉ LONG.

III.

SOME MISTAKES OF REAR ADMIRAL TAYLOR.

IN the July number of your valuable periodical, Wm. Rogers Taylor, Rear Admiral U. S. N., in an article entitled “A Mistake by General Beauregard,” disagrees with my narrative published by you of the engagement of the Confederate rams “Palmetto State” and “Chicora,” on the 31st of January, 1863, with the Federal blockading fleet, then stationed off the Charleston harbor. What I said in the communication complained of was the substance of what Commodore Ingraham and Commanders Tucker and Rutledge had told me, and of what was afterwards reiterated by them in their official reports of the occurrence. I was not on board either Confederate ram on that day, but I had suggested the sortie referred to, and was one of the first to be apprised of every detail of the action. The idea never crossed my mind that any information then given me by Commodore Ingraham and the two commanders under him could ever be disputed as incorrect. Their honorable character was a sufficient guaranty of their reliability. And, in fact, I had myself—with many others—actually witnessed the result of this naval attack.

If I understand him aright, Rear Admiral Taylor denies that “the vessels composing the blockading squadron,” on that occasion, “hurriedly steamed out to sea, and entirely disappeared,” when set upon by the two Southern gunboats, and that “the entire harbor remained in the full possession” of the Confederates. And he therefore denies that the blockade of Charleston was